

**MINUTES OF BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY NATIONAL
PARK AUTHORITY HELD AT CONFERENCE ROOM, PLAS Y FFYNNON,
CAMBRIAN WAY, BRECON LD3 7HP ON TUESDAY, 9TH APRIL, 2019**

PRESENT:

Powys

Cllr Ratcliffe (Deputy Chair), Cllr Phil Pritchard, Cllr E Roderick and Cllr McNicholas

Monmouthshire

Carmarthenshire

Merthyr Tydfil

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Cllr G Thomas

Torfaen

Cllr Ashley

Blaenau Gwent

Cllr J Hill

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Mr Ian Rowat, Mr James Marsden, Ms Deborah Perkin, Mr Julian Stedman and Mr Christopher Coppock

In Attendance

Angharad HawkesStephen Gray, Delivery Director
Ms Clare Hardy, Monitoring Officer
Mr Julian Atkins, Chief Executive
Elaine Standen, Finance Manager
Mrs Julia Gruffydd, Democratic Services Manager

Apologies

Mr E Evans, Cllr E Durrant, Cllr Rogers, Grenville Ham and Holden

30/19 Correspondence

Deputy Chair Cllr Gareth Ratcliffe took the chair in the absence of Mr Ed Evans. He welcomed members, officers and members of the public to the meeting and gave a warm welcome to Mrs Pam Hibbert, recently appointed independent member of the Standards Committee, who was observing the meeting as part of her induction.

Apologies for absence were noted and the Chair sent the best wishes of the Authority to Mr Ham who was recovering from illness.

31/19 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

32/19 Minutes

The Democratic Services Manager thanked a member who had highlighted an omission in Minute 14/19. She advised of the change.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019, as amended, and authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record:

33/19 Audit & Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 26-10-18

RESOLVED: To receive the minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 October 2018.

34/19 Public Speaking

Eleven public speakers had registered to vote in relation to agenda item 8, Mid Wales Hospital Development Brief:

Mr Russell Pryce
Mr Alun Rees
Mr Peter Weavers
Mr Michael Bowers
Prof Alan Lovell
Ms Virginia Brown
Mr Niel Bally
Cllr William Powell (Talgarth Town Council)

Mr John Dunne (Neighbourhood Watch/Residents Association)
PC Lucy Bassett/PCSO Helen Scott (Dyfed Powys Police)
Mr Terry McClatchey

35/19 Chairman's Announcements

In the absence of the Chair of the Authority the Deputy Chair had nothing to report.

36/19 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive had circulated his announcements to members. He added that a presentation on the Powys joint services hub would be made to the next Policy Forum. He would brief members on a further confidential matter in the exempt part of the meeting.

37/19 Mid Wales Hospital Development Brief

The Principal Planning Officer introduced Alistair Knox from Powys County Council Highways department. She advised of the purpose of a development brief which was to supplement the policies in the Local Development Plan. It did not constitute a planning application, which would be the next stage, and which would give full opportunity for public consultation and scrutiny. She presented her report on the brief.

The Chair then invited members of the public listed above to address the Authority before inviting members to comment. He reminded members that the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive had issued guidance to members on this item and that the legal advisor had provided advice on avoiding pre-determination pending consideration of a planning application in future.

A point was made that the site was allocated in the Local Development Plan and the principle for development established. The brief would allow a detailed planning application to be considered with a positive outcome for residents and the Authority, although sustainability issues might need more consideration. It was noted that design, use of materials and energy had been well thought through which supported the Authority's responsibilities under climate change, but that ecological connectivity was weak. It was hoped that this could be addressed at the planning application stage, and officer confirmed that they could work with the developer on this.

Some concerns were expressed in terms of the alienation of local people should the brief be approved, which suggested that the consultation had not been effective. A member questioned why the Authority had to move to a development brief and felt there was a danger of institutional pre-determination. Officers advised that it was requirement that mixed use sites such as this had a development brief, which provided a cohesive approach against which to determine a planning application. Using this as supplementary planning guidance would prevent piecemeal development on the site.

An amendment was proposed to approve the development brief but not adopt it as supplementary planning guidance but this was not supported.

RESOLVED: To endorse the Development Brief for the Former Mid Wales Hospital Site for use as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Development Plan.

38/19 Annual Prudential Code report on Treasury Management and borrowing limits for 2019/20

The Finance Manager presented a report seeking approval to retain existing precautionary borrowing limits. Members noted that the Authority is currently deb-free.

RESOLVED: That the Authority continues the present arrangements in relation to operational and authorised borrowing limits and Treasury Management for 2019/20.

39/19 Review of Code of Corporate Governance

Members considered proposed changes to the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance in line with audit recommendations and in order to update the document.

Some typographical and grammatical errors were noted, and it was suggested that a general reference to the Scheme of Delegation being kept under review should replace the detail. A member also proposed that a statement should be incorporated under principle 3 or 4 emphasising that the Authority would use the best available evidence in its decision making.

RESOLVED: To review the Code of Corporate Governance, as amended in the meeting and approve changes.

40/19 Member Development Programme 2019-20

Members considered the draft Member Development Programme for 2019/20. The Democratic Services Manager encouraged members to let her know if they needed further support or if they would like to spend time with individual officers or teams.

The Chief Executive suggested that one of the unallocated days be used to brief members on the interpretation strategy. A member commented that the best development days were those involving site visits linked to purposes and duty. The officer advised that this was the aim of the themed days linked to key work areas, which would be run every other year.

The Landscape and Biodiversity Champion offered to take any member for a walk to discuss land biodiversity issues and recommended spending a day with a warden. He asked that the Climate Change event be brought forward.

RESOLVED: To approve the Member Development Programme for 2019-20.

Cllrs J Hill, G Thomas and P Pritchard left the meeting.

41/19 Partnership Scrutiny: Progress Report

The Chair welcomed former member Prof Alan Lovell to the meeting to present a final report on the Partnership Scrutiny together with co-author Deborah Perkin. Ms Perkin advised that some issues had already been addressed through the Governance Review.

A member was critical that the recommendations had not been discussed at a member workshop as agreed by the Authority in June 2018. He did not wish to consider the recommendations en bloc as some were already in the CEO's objectives for this year and others cut across existing plans. He also took issue with the lack of reference to wider land ownership in the Park.

The CEO confirmed that the Senior Leadership Group had not seen the recommendations; it was usual with scrutiny reports for officers to draw up an action plan. He commented that the Authority was already quite a long way forward in progressing the recommendations.

Prof Lovell gave a summary of where the Authority was when the scrutiny study began in 2015 where little time was given to strategic thinking or direction. He welcomed the new Policy Forum and the fact that members and officers could work together out of the public domain. At the time there had been less understanding of the role of officers as the face of the Authority and the recommendations had been drawn up for a reason.

The Delivery Director offered a fresh pair of eyes and referred to the shift from operational to strategic focus. He recognised the good work in the report and suggested that officers should be allowed to provide a report of progress against each recommendation as it stood. A member felt that this didn't need to be divisive and agreed that recommendations on partnership had been absorbed into the way of working and that the Authority was more sophisticated and involved than previously.

A member queried how the Authority supported volunteers as he had attended an introductory session for volunteers and the induction day had not materialised. Several members felt that the recommendations were for officers to incorporate into work programme and reviewed at Policy Forum.

A member welcomed Prof Lovell's comments on the impact of human relationships and how the Authority communicated with the public through key points of contact such as wardens. He had noted the positive culture change and the role of the Policy Forum in that change.

A member suggested amending the recommendation to 'receive and note' rather than 'approve'. Ms Perkin pointed out that despite thanking the authors for the report members were not prepared to make a decision on the recommendations. She felt strongly that there needed to be responsibility taken for the role of volunteers. She therefore asked that in addition to the proposed amendment recommendations 9 and 10 be approved in relation to volunteers.

RESOLVED:

- a) That recommendations 9 and 10 of the final Scrutiny Report on Partnerships be agreed;
- b) That an item be put on the next Authority agenda to consider a role for supporting volunteers;
- c) That recommendations 1-8 and 11-14 of the report be received and noted;
- d) That the Senior Leadership Group be asked to provide regular reports to the Policy Forum on implementation of and progress against the recommendations in the Scrutiny Report.

42/19 Nature Recovery Action Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park

The Ecology Officers gave a short presentation. The Member Champion for Landscape and Biodiversity commended the action plan and the exceptional work of the team. He highlighted some points for the future, including aligning the aspirations of the plan with other key documents, applying urgency to delivering the actions, given the scales of the task, and considering landscape changes as a way of changing nature, working with key landowners.

A member thanked officers for the excellent presentation and welcomed the passion of members and officers. He felt capacity was the key in deciding where to prioritise, recognising the staff resource necessary to set up and maintain partnerships.

It was suggested that the action plan would be a useful tool to lobby the Welsh Government for changes in agricultural practices. The Chief Executive advised that Welsh Government officials were visiting the Park later in the week and he would raise this.

RESOLVED: To adopt the Nature Recovery Action Plan.

Cllr K Madge and Cllr M Jones left the meeting.

43/19 Planning Protocol

The Planning and Heritage Manager presented proposed changes to the Authority's Planning Protocol which included updates but also specifically changes to the procedures

for planning site visits to ensure that these were quorate in future and that more members were able to participate in decision making.

The Chair of Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee advised that he would still be encouraging all members to attend site visits. However, improved officer reports and the new presentation equipment might mean that fewer site visits were needed in future.

A member asked the officer to check the wording to ensure that no member would be restricted from participating in a planning decision if they hadn't attended the site visit. He also said that terminology should be checked as there were references to 'Councillor' rather than 'member'.

Concern was expressed that there could be very few on a site visit but the officer advised that there would always be a minimum of three or four members.

RESOLVED: To approve the revised and updated Planning Protocol.

Cllr A James left the meeting.

44/19 Review of Pre-planning application charging and associated fees

The Planning and Heritage Manager presented a review of the pre-planning application service and of the planning search fees and copying charges.

A member expressed concern about the level of some fees which the public were required to pay and the officer advised that the charges in the report were the ones on which the Authority had discretion. The member was referring to statutory fees which were set nationally and over which the Authority had little or no influence.

A member hoped that the increases represented full cost recovery and urged the officer to bring further proposals if necessary. The Chief Executive advised that these increases were in response to income targets set in February and were set at a level to achieve these. It was noted that charging regimes could take up to 12 months to bed in.

RESOLVED: To approve the proposed changes to and charges for pre-application advice and changes to search fees and copying charges as follows:

- a) the current Planning Pre-Application Advice Service including additional fee charging as set out in this report;**
- a) that a trial run of 3 months is undertaken to ascertain the capacity to offer a fast track householder application service;**
- c) that a review of charges for planning search fees and photocopying services be carried out**

45/19 BBNPA Sustainable Development Team

Members received a report on the contribution of the Sustainable Development Team to delivery on the National Park Management Plan and Corporate Objectives.

46/19 Member and Member Champion Reports

The Landscape and Biodiversity Champion reported on an excellent meeting with the Chief Vet arranged by Cllr Edwin Roderick through the Meithrin Mynydd Advisory Group. It had been an extremely useful meeting which all who attended felt could be a blueprint for future meetings.

47/19 Gifts & Hospitality

No declarations were received.

48/19 Access to Information

RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 20 in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

49/19 Request for BBNPA to become a Founder Member of the National Parks UK Charity Foundation

The Chief Executive briefed members on the establishment of the national charity.

There was some discussion about risk and the need for due diligence to be applied in relation to business. It was suggested that the Chief Executive and Delivery Director be given authority to progress the work of the charity in association with the work of National Parks Partnerships and the Chief Executive informed members that a report revising the Scheme of Delegation was in preparation and such a change could be considered within this.

A member felt that it needed to be made clearer that the benefits from the charity would come back to National Park Authorities rather than individual trustees. The role of National Park Authority members sitting as trustees would also need to be made clear and the Chief Executive undertook to seek clarity from the existing Trustees.

RESOLVED: That Members authorize:

a) the Chief Executive to confirm that the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority wishes to apply to become a Founder Member of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation.

b) Chair and Deputy Chair to propose and or second nominations to the Board of Trustees.

50/19 Any Other Business

In confidential session the Chief Executive briefed members on current and future funding issues.

Signed as a correct record
Chairman of the National Park Authority